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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7308  
INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY  
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0684  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/15/2026

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN ELECTION SEASON MORE PEACEFUL THAN  
EXPECTED

REF: A. CARACAS 03018

[1](#)B. CARACAS 02827

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT DOWNES FOR 1.4 (D)

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More Concern than Actual Violence  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) Before the December 3 presidential elections, isolated attacks on opposition challenger Manuel Rosales' campaign rallies in September and October suggested the likelihood of an increasing spiral of electoral violence (reftels). President Chavez' campaign tried to blame the opposition for inciting the attacks, claiming that Rosales was campaigning in poor areas considered to be Chavista turf. However, the resulting negative publicity for Chavez, and Rosales' refusal to back down from his forays into poor neighborhoods, encouraged Chavez' Fifth Republic Movement party to rein in his more radical supporters during the latter part of the campaign.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Election day was also remarkably quiet, despite insistent rumors of plans for unrest. There were isolated incidents toward the end of election day, such as in western Miranda State where pro-Chavez supporters on motorcycles intimidated opposition supporters waiting to watch the manual count of voting receipts.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Post election, some took the victory celebrations too far. For example, overzealous supporters sacked and burned Rosales' campaign headquarters in Valencia, Carabobo early December 4. Also on the same day in Caracas, someone reportedly tried to incite an attack on the home of the spokeswoman for Rosales' "Mi Negra" program. However, the would-be attackers' plans were thwarted in part due to the woman's two large dogs. Despite these examples, most election day incidents involved alcohol-related accidental shootings during pro-Chavez victory celebrations and the random crime that plagues the country.

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Comment  
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[1](#)4. (C) Rosales' quick concession and his focus on constitutional reform as the opposition's next priority helped ease the calm transition to the post-election period. With the exception of the two incidents mentioned above, political tension has largely dissipated as the country winds down for the holidays.

